

**Social Reality of Cancer in Family.
Professional Social Work in the Field of Support
for Informal Caregivers of People with Oncologic Disease.
The Trigger for Reflections on Oncologic Social Work**

SUMMARY

The aim of the book referred to a dyad which includes a person with an oncologic disease and his/her main caregiver from the family. Considering the huge number of challenges, not only of medical nature, but mainly of psychosocial type, which are part of confrontation with an oncologic disease, I tried to stimulate reflection on consequences of cancer. The disease becomes not only a burden for the ill person, but it is also a severe challenge for their loved ones. The disease, with regard for emotional relations in the family and the fact that the treatment process takes place mainly in the domestic zone, becomes the situation which influences the whole family. For this reason, the potential of informal caregivers and the factors which support them in this role seem to be a crucial issue. It is well known that they are the main link of the most effective, long lasting and the most economic system of help. In order to prevent this link from weakening and from discontinuing the caring role, we can apply modern and strengthening social work.

The goal of the published treatise is to introduce into the issue discussed some aspects important for creation of theoretical basis, for research development and for popularisation of support actions in the field of cancer social work.

The oncologic social work, that matches the needs of the 21st century, should cover individuals and families in the diagnosis period, during treatment stages, the time the treatment is finished, remission period, new treatment process, when the ill person's life is coming to an end and also during the mourning period after the loss of the loved ones.

It seems that observation of the tendencies, which are present not only in Poland, such as: predictions of expected rise of cancer, aging population, tendency to shorten treatment in hospitals and particularly complex psychosocial consequences of the disease, any conclusions in favour of the support system improvement will improve also the life quality of individuals, families and entire communities. It is even more true that social work in the face of a life-threatening disease appears to confirm the values and richness hidden in human experiences and the profession of a social worker and it can ease even the most difficult experiences.

Key words: informal caregiver, oncologic disease, oncologic social work, support in a life-threatening disease